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A Pushing-Up Approach to the Quasithin Simple Finite Groups with Solvable 2-Local Subgroups

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1. INTRODUCTION

A finite group G of even order is said to be quasithin if $e(G) \leq 2$, while G is thin if $e(G) \leq 1$, where $e(G)$ is the maximum of the 2-local p -rank $m_{2,p}(G)$ as p ranges over all odd primes, and $m_{2,p}(G)$ is the maximum of the p -rank $m_p(L)$ as L ranges over all 2-local subgroups of G . The group G is said to be of characteristic 2 type if each 2-local subgroup L of G satisfies the condition $C_L(O_2(L)) \leq O_2(L)$ or equivalently $F^*(L) = O_2(L)$.

The purpose of this paper is to give an alternative proof of the following theorem established by the combined work of Janko [1] and Smith [2].

THEOREM. *Let G be a quasithin nonabelian simple finite group of characteristic 2 type in which each 2-local subgroup is solvable. Then G is isomorphic to one of the groups A_6 , $L_2(p)$, p a Fermat or Mersenne prime ≥ 5 , $L_3(3)$, M_{11} , $U_3(3)$, $L_2(2^n)$, $Sz(2^{2n-1})$, $U_3(2^n)$, $n \geq 2$, and ${}^2F_4(2)'$.*

This theorem forms the starting point for Mason's analysis to determine all quasithin simple finite groups of characteristic 2 type. Mason's result (unpublished) is one of the major steps in the classification of the simple finite groups. For an outline of the classification, the reader may consult

the Proceedings [3, 4] of the Durham Conference and the Santa Cruz Conference on finite groups.

In a previous paper [5], we have given an alternative proof of the theorem of Janko by making use of a pushing-up theorem. Our aim is to pursue the same method to obtain a unified proof of the theorems of Janko and Smith. Thus our method is keeping aloof from Thompson's method [6] which Janko and Smith have used.

The invariant $f(G)$ defined as follows is more pertinent to our method than $e(G)$. If G is a finite group and p is a prime, we shall denote by $n_p(G)$ the maximum rank of a chief p -factor of G . When G has even order, we define $n_{2,p}(G)$ to be the maximum of $n_p(L)$ as L ranges over all 2-local subgroups of G , and then define $f(G)$ to be the maximum of $n_{2,p}(G)$ as p ranges over all odd primes. Thompson [6] observed that if $e(G) \leq 2$ then $f(G) \leq 2$. Our method is easily extended to the case $f(G) \leq 2$.

Our notation is standard except the following: If S is a subgroup of a group G , $\langle S^G \rangle$ denotes the subgroup generated by all G -conjugates of S and $\bigcap S^G$ denotes the intersection of all G -conjugates of S . We shall not use G' for the commutator subgroup $[G, G]$.

2. PUSHING-UP THEOREMS

If G is a group and S is its subgroup, we shall denote by $O_S(G)$ the unique maximal normal subgroup of G contained in S . A pushing-up theorem is aimed at answering the following fundamental question about $O_S(G)$.

QUESTION. *Let G be a group and let X_i , $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, be finite subgroups of G which have a common subgroup S such that $O_S(X_i) \neq 1$ for each i and $O_S(\langle X_1, \dots, X_n \rangle) = 1$. Determine the structure of the X_i , $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$.*

The pushing-up theorems which are used in this paper are all concerned with the following definitions.

DEFINITION. Let X be a finite group and S be a subgroup. The group X is S -irreducible if S is contained in a unique maximal subgroup of X . The group X is 2-irreducible if X is S -irreducible for $S \in \text{Syl}_2(X)$.

DEFINITION. If finite subgroups X_1 , X_2 , and S of some group G satisfy the condition $S \in \text{Syl}_2(X_i)$, $i = 1, 2$, we shall call the triple (X_1, S, X_2) a Sylow 2-amalgam or an S_2 -amalgam in G . If furthermore X_i is S -irreducible and $O_S(X_i) \neq 1$ for each i while $O_S(\langle X_1, X_2 \rangle) = 1$, we shall say that the S_2 -amalgam is extremal.

As in [5], we shall limit our proof of the Janko–Smith theorem to the determination of the 2-local structure of the group G under investigation to the extent necessary to identify G by some characterization theorems. The starting point of this 2-local analysis is the following theorem [7].

THEOREM A. *Let G be a group of characteristic 2 type and let $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$. If each 2-local subgroup of G is solvable, then one of the following holds:*

- (A.1) *There is an extremal S_2 -amalgam (X_1, S, X_2) in G .*
- (A.2) *S is contained in a unique maximal 2-local subgroup of G .*

The goal of our 2-local analysis is the following two theorems.

THEOREM B. *In case (A.1) of Theorem A, if in addition $f(G) \leq 2$, then the X_i , $i = 1, 2$, are thin.*

THEOREM C. *In case (A.2) of Theorem A, one of the following holds:*

- (C.1) *The unique maximal 2-local subgroup of G containing S is a strongly embedded subgroup, which is proper if $O_2(G) = 1$.*
- (C.2) *S is dihedral or semidihedral or isomorphic to a Sylow 2-subgroup of $\text{Aut}(Sp_4(2))$.*

It is evident that Theorem C gives enough information about case (A.2): if G is simple, we can identify G by appealing to well-known characterization theorems, with the help of transfer lemmas when S is of type $\text{Aut}(Sp_4(2))$. Also Theorem B gives almost enough information about case (A.1) with $f(G) \leq 2$, for the possible structure of the groups X_i and S in Theorem B is determined completely by the following Theorem D [8–10] and hence if G is simple, we shall be able to identify G by some extra work and appealing to some characterization theorems. Theorem D will also be used in the proofs of Theorems B and C.

THEOREM D. *Let (X_1, S, X_2) be an extremal S_2 -amalgam in some group satisfying the following conditions:*

- (D.1) $C_{X_i}(O_2(X_i)) \leq O_2(X_i)$, $i = 1, 2$.
- (D.2) X_i is solvable and thin, $i = 1, 2$.

Then (X_1, S, X_2) or (X_2, S, X_1) is isomorphic to one of the $GL_3(2)$ -amalgam, $Sp_4(2)$ -amalgam, $G_2(2)'$ -amalgam, $G_2(2)$ -amalgam, M_{12} -amalgam, $\text{Aut}(M_{12})$ -amalgam, ${}^2F_4(2)'$ -amalgam, and ${}^2F_4(2)$ -amalgam.

The reader may consult [9, II] for the definitions not given above.

Having shown that Theorems B and C serve our purpose, we conclude with two more pushing-up theorems of Tanaka [11] and Gomi [12].

THEOREM E. *Let (X_1, S, X_2) be an extremal S_2 -amalgam in some group satisfying (D.1) and the following:*

$$(E.1) \quad X_i \text{ is solvable and } f(X_i) \leq 2, \quad i = 1, 2.$$

$$(E.2) \quad S = [O_2(X_1), O^2(X_1)](O_2(X_1) \cap O_2(X_2))[O_2(X_2), O^2(X_2)].$$

Then the X_i , $i = 1, 2$, are thin, and hence the S_2 -amalgam (X_1, S, X_2) is determined by Theorem D.

We note that if an extremal S_2 -amalgam (X_1, S, X_2) satisfies (D.1) and (D.2), then it satisfies (E.2) (and (E.1)). To prove this, observe that $[O_2(X_i), O^2(X_i)](O_2(X_i) \cap O_2(X_2))$ is normal in X_i and then use [9, I, 3.2.4] to show that it is equal to $O_2(X_i)$, $i = 1, 2$. As $S = O_2(X_1)O_2(X_2)$ by [9, I, 3.5], it follows that (E.2) is satisfied.

THEOREM F. *Let G be a solvable 2-irreducible group with $C_G(O_2(G)) \leq O_2(G)$, and let $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$. If no nonidentity characteristic subgroup of S is normal in G , then $G = SJ(G)$ and $J(G)$ is the direct product of one or more (isomorphic) copies of S_4 , copies of D_8 , and copies of Z_2 .*

Here $J(G)$ is the Thompson subgroup generated by all elementary abelian 2-subgroups of G of maximal order.

3. SOLVABLE 2-IRREDUCIBLE GROUPS

In this section, G is a solvable 2-irreducible group, $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$, and H is the unique maximal subgroup of G containing S .

3.1. (1) If $N \triangleleft G$, then either $S \cap N \triangleleft G$ or $O^2(G) \leq N$.

(2) If $O_2(G) \leq N \triangleleft G$ and $O^2(G) \not\leq N$, then $O_2(G) \in \text{Syl}_2(N)$ and $O_2(G/N) = 1$.

(3) $\pi(G) \subset \{2, p\}$ for some odd prime p .

(4) If $S \triangleleft G$, then G/S is a cyclic p -group, $p \neq 2$.

Proof. (1) A Frattini argument gives $G = N_G(S \cap N)SN$ and so either $N_G(S \cap N) = G$ or $SN = G$ by the S -irreducibility of G . This shows that either $S \cap N \triangleleft G$ or $O^2(G) \leq N$.

(2) As $O_2(G) \leq S \cap N \triangleleft G$ by (1), $O_2(G) = S \cap N \in \text{Syl}_2(N)$. Let $M/N = O_2(G/N)$. Then $O^2(G) \not\leq M$ and so $O_2(G) \in \text{Syl}_2(M)$ by what we have shown. Hence, $M = O_2(G)N = N$.

(3) By Hall's theorem, S is contained in a Hall $\{2, p\}$ -subgroup G_p of G for each odd prime p , and G is generated by all the G_p . Thus $G = G_p$ for some p by the S -irreducibility of G .

(4) If $S \triangleleft G$, then G/S is a 2-irreducible p -group, $p \neq 2$, so G/S has precisely one maximal subgroup and hence is cyclic.

3.2. If $\pi(G) \subset \{2, p\}$ and $P \in \text{Syl}_p(G)$, then the following hold.

(1) $PO_2(G)/\Phi(P)O_2(G)$ is a chief factor of G with

$$C_G(PO_2(G)/\Phi(P)O_2(G)) = PO_2(G).$$

(2) $H = \Phi(P)S$.

(3) $O^2(G) = P[O_2(G), O^2(G)]$.

(4) If $N \triangleleft G$ and $O^2(G) \not\leq N$, then $(PN/N)/\Phi(PN/N) \cong P/\Phi(P)$.

Proof. (1) We may assume $O_2(G) = 1$. By 3.1.2 applied to $N = O_p(G)$, $G = O_{p,2}(G)$ and so $P = O_p(G) \triangleleft G$. Hence, $\Phi(P) \triangleleft G$ and $C_G(P/\Phi(P)) = P$. Suppose $L \triangleleft G$ and $\Phi(P) < L < P$. By Maschke's theorem, G has a normal subgroup M such that $P/\Phi(P) = L/\Phi(P) \times M/\Phi(P)$. As $G = PS$ and $P \cap S = 1$, LS and MS are proper subgroups of G generating G . This contradicts the S -irreducibility of G .

(2) We may assume $O_2(G) = 1$. We have $H = (P \cap H)S$ and $P \cap H \neq P$. Hence $P \neq (P \cap H)\Phi(P) \triangleleft \langle P, S \rangle = G$, so $P \cap H \leq \Phi(P)$ by (1). Thus $H \leq \Phi(P)S$. Conversely $\Phi(P)S$ is a proper subgroup of G by (1) and so $\Phi(P)S \leq H$.

(3) This is because $P[O_2(G), O^2(G)] \triangleleft PO_2(G) \triangleleft G$.

(4) If $P \cap N \not\leq \Phi(P)$, then $N \not\leq \Phi(P)S = H$ and so $G = SN$, a contradiction. Thus $P \cap N \leq \Phi(P)$, so $\Phi(P/P \cap N) = \Phi(P)/P \cap N$ and $(P/P \cap N)/\Phi(P/P \cap N) \cong P/\Phi(P)$.

3.3. Let $\pi(G) \subset \{2, p\}$ and assume $O_2(G) = 1$. Then $Z(S)$ is cyclic, and if $S \neq 1$, then the involution of $Z(S)$ inverts $O_p(G)/\Phi(O_p(G))$.

Proof. Regard $V = O_p(G)/\Phi(O_p(G))$ as a $GF(p)$ -space. Then by 3.2.1, S is faithfully and irreducibly represented on V . By Schur's lemma, $Z(S)$ is cyclic, and if $F = GF(p)(\zeta)$, where ζ is a primitive $|Z(S)|$ th root of unity in an algebraic closure of $GF(p)$, then V may be regarded as an FS -module so that for some generator z of $Z(S)$, $zv = \zeta v$ for all $v \in V$. Consequently the involution of $Z(S)$ inverts V .

3.4. If $zO_2(G)$ is an involution of $Z(S/O_2(G))$, then the following four conditions for $g \in G$ are equivalent.

(1) $g \notin H$.

$$(2) \quad G = \langle S, z^g \rangle.$$

$$(3) \quad G = \langle S, S^g \rangle.$$

$$(4) \quad G = \langle S, g \rangle.$$

Proof. It suffices to prove that (1) implies (2), and we may assume $O_2(G) = 1$. Let $\pi(G) = \{2, p\}$ and $P \in \text{Syl}_p(G)$. Write $g = sa$ with $s \in S$ and $a \in P$. Assume $g \notin H$. Then $a \notin \Phi(P)$ as $H = S\Phi(P)$ by 3.2.2. As $P = O_p(G)$ by 3.2.1, $a^z \equiv a^{-1} \pmod{\Phi(P)}$ by Section 3.3, so $zz^g = zz^a = a^{-z}a \equiv a^2 \pmod{\Phi(P)}$. If $z^g \in H$, then $a^2 \in H \cap P = \Phi(P)$, so $a \in \Phi(P)$, which is a contradiction. Thus $z^g \notin H$ and $G = \langle S, z^g \rangle$.

3.5. If $S/O_2(G)$ is a nonidentity elementary abelian group, then $G/O_2(G)$ is a dihedral group.

Proof. As $|S/O_2(G)| = 2$ by Section 3.3 applied to $G/O_2(G)$, 3.4.3 shows that $G/O_2(G)$ is generated by two involutions and hence dihedral.

3.6. If $S \neq O_2(G)$ and G has a noncentral chief 2-factor V with $|V| \leq 8$, then $G/O_2(G)$ is a dihedral $\{2, 3\}$ -group and $|V| = 4$.

Proof. Let $\pi(G) = \{2, p\}$ and $P \in \text{Syl}_p(G)$. Let $*$ denote the natural homomorphism $G \rightarrow G/C_G(V)$. Then G^* is an irreducible subgroup of $GL(V)$, where V is regarded as a $GF(2)$ -space. Consequently $O_2(G^*) = 1$, so $O_p(G^*) \neq 1$. Further since $O^2(G) \leq C_G(V)$ and $S \neq O_2(G)$, we have $S^* \neq 1$ by 3.1.2. The p -local structure of $GL_3(2) \cong L_2(7)$ now shows $G^* \cong D_6$, so $|V| = 4$ by the irreducibility of G^* . Further $P^* \cong Z_3$ and so P is a cyclic 3-group by 3.2.4. Hence, $|S/O_2(G)| = 2$ by 3.2.1 and thus $G/O_2(G)$ is dihedral by Section 3.5.

4. PUSHING-UP AND PULLING-DOWN

In this section, we shall study the following situation.

HYPOTHESIS. *The finite group G is of characteristic 2 type and each 2-local subgroup of G is solvable.*

All propositions and definitions in this section will be stated under this hypothesis. They are designed to be used in possible future work.

DEFINITIONS. (1) If T is a 2-subgroup of G , we define $I(T)$ to be the set of all T -irreducible subgroups X of G with $T \in \text{Syl}_2(X)$ and $C_X(O_2(X)) \leq O_2(X)$.

(2) We shall denote by Ω the set of all ordered triples (X, T, Y) of a

2-subgroup T of G and a pair X, Y of elements of $I(T)$. We shall often write $X_T Y$ for (X, T, Y) . If $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$, we define $O_2(\alpha) = O_T(\langle X, Y \rangle)$.

(3) If subgroups X and Y of G satisfy the condition $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(Y)$, we shall say that X is 2-embedded into Y and write $X \leq_2 Y$.

Remark. If $\alpha = (X, T, Y)$ is an extremal S_2 -amalgam with $C_X(O_2(X)) \leq O_2(X)$ and $C_Y(O_2(Y)) \leq O_2(Y)$, then $\alpha \in \Omega$ and $O_2(\alpha) = 1$. The converse is also true.

4.1. If $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$ and $O_2(\alpha) \neq 1$, then the following hold:

(1) $\langle X, Y \rangle$ is solvable.

(2) If $M = \langle O^2(Y)^{\langle X, Y \rangle} \rangle$ and M/N is a chief factor of $\langle X, Y \rangle$, then M/N is an elementary abelian q -group, where $\pi(Y) = \{2, q\}$.

(3) Either $X \leq_2 Y$ or $Y \leq_2 X$.

(4) $Z(T) \leq O_2(\alpha)$.

Proof. As $O_2(\alpha) \neq 1$, $\langle X, Y \rangle$ is solvable and so, as $O^2(Y) \not\leq N$, M/N is an elementary abelian q -group. Set $L = \langle O^2(X)^{\langle X, Y \rangle} \rangle$. In proving (3) and (4), we may assume without loss that L is not a proper subgroup of M . Then $L \not\leq N$ and $M \not\leq N$, so $T \cap N \leq O_2(\alpha)$ by 3.1.1. Hence, $[O_2(Y), O^2(Y)] \leq T \cap M = T \cap N \leq O_2(\alpha) \leq O_2(X)$. Thus $Y \leq_2 X$ and, as $C_Y(O_2(Y)) \leq O_2(Y)$, $O^2(Y)$ is not contained in $C = C_{\langle X, Y \rangle}(O_2(\alpha))$. Hence, $T \cap C \triangleleft Y$ by 3.1.1. If $O^2(X) \not\leq C$, then also $T \cap C \triangleleft X$, so $T \cap C \leq O_2(\alpha)$ and in particular $Z(T) \leq O_2(\alpha)$. Therefore assume $O^2(X) \leq C$. Then $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq T \cap C \leq O_2(Y)$ and so $X \leq_2 Y$ as well as $Y \leq_2 X$. This yields that $O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y)$ is normal in $\langle X, Y \rangle$ and so equal to $O_2(\alpha)$. As $C_X(O_2(X)) \leq O_2(X)$ and $C_Y(O_2(Y)) \leq O_2(Y)$, $Z(T) \leq O_2(\alpha)$ in this case as well.

4.2. Let $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$ and assume that the following two conditions are satisfied:

(i) $O_2(\alpha) \neq 1$.

(ii) X is not 2-embedded into Y .

Set $M = \langle O^2(Y)^{\langle X, Y \rangle} \rangle$ and let M/N be a chief factor of $\langle X, Y \rangle$. Then the following hold:

(1) $\langle X, Y \rangle = XM$.

(2) $C_{O_2(X)}(M/N) = O_2(\alpha)$.

(3) If X is not 2-closed, then the nilpotency class of T is greater than 2.

Proof. (1) It is enough to observe $Y = TO^2(Y)$.

(2) Let $L/M = O_2(\langle X, Y \rangle / M)$ and $K/N = O_2(L/N)$. Then $O_2(X) \leq L$ by (1), and 4.1.2 shows that L/N is a $\{2, q\}$ -group, where $\pi(Y) = \{2, q\}$, with $O_{2,q}(L/N) = KM/N = K/N \times M/N$. Hence, $C_{O_2(X)}(M/N) = C_{O_2(X)}(KM/K) = O_2(X) \cap KM = O_2(X) \cap K$. Now as $O^2(Y) \not\leq K$, $T \cap K \triangleleft Y$ by 3.1.1. Hence, $O^2(X) \not\leq K$ by (ii) and so $T \cap K \triangleleft X$ also. Thus $O_2(X) \cap K \leq T \cap K \leq O_2(\alpha)$. Conversely the definitions of L and K show $O_2(\alpha) \leq O_2(X) \cap K$. Therefore, $O_2(X) \cap K = O_2(\alpha)$.

(3) Set $C = C_X(O_2(X)/O_2(\alpha))$. Then $O^2(X) \not\leq C$ by (ii) and so $T \cap C \leq O_2(X)$ by 3.1.1. If T has nilpotency class 1 or 2, then $T \leq C$ by 4.1.4 and so X is 2-closed.

4.3. Let $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$ and assume that the following four conditions are satisfied:

- (i) $O_2(\alpha) \neq 1$.
- (ii) X is not 2-embedded into Y .
- (iii) $O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y) \neq O_2(\alpha)$.
- (iv) $T = O_2(X) O_2(Y)$.

Set $M = \langle O^2(Y)^{\langle X, Y \rangle} \rangle$ and let M/N be a chief factor of $\langle X, Y \rangle$. Let $P \in \text{Syl}_p(X)$ and $Q \in \text{Syl}_q(Y)$, where $\pi(X) = \{2, p\}$ and $\pi(Y) = \{2, q\}$. Then M/N is an elementary abelian q -group with $m(M/N) \geq |P/\Phi(P)| m(Q/\Phi(Q))$.

Proof. Statements 4.1.2 and 4.2.1 show that we may regard M/N as an irreducible $GF(q)X$ -module with respect to the action induced by conjugation. Set $V = O^2(Y)N/N$. Then T leaves V invariant, and Section 3.2 together with (iv) shows that V is an irreducible $GF(q) O_2(X)$ -submodule with $\dim(V) = m(Q/\Phi(Q))$ and $C_{O_2(X)}(V) = O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y)$. Since $(M/N)_{O_2(X)}$ is completely reducible by Maschke's theorem, it is the direct sum of its homogeneous components, which are transitively permuted by X . Let B be the homogeneous component containing V and let X_B be the stabilizer of B in X . Then $T \leq X_B$ and there are precisely $|X:X_B|$ homogeneous components. If there is only one homogeneous component, then $C_{O_2(X)}(V) = C_{O_2(X)}(M/N) = O_2(\alpha)$ by 4.2.2, and (iii) is violated. Hence $|X:X_B| > 1$ and thus $X_B \leq \Phi(P)T$ by 3.2.2. Therefore, $m(M/N) = \dim(M/N) \geq |X:X_B| \dim(V) \geq |P/\Phi(P)| m(Q/\Phi(Q))$.

DEFINITION. If $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$, we define

$$T_\alpha = [O_2(X), O^2(X)](O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y))[O_2(Y), O^2(Y)],$$

$$X_\alpha = T_\alpha O^2(X), \text{ and } Y_\alpha = T_\alpha O^2(Y).$$

4.4. If $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$, then the following hold:

- (1) $T_\alpha \triangleleft T$ and $X_\alpha \triangleleft X$.
- (2) $T_\alpha \in \text{Syl}_2(X_\alpha)$.
- (3) $C_{X_\alpha}(O_2(X_\alpha)) \leq O_2(X_\alpha)$.
- (4) $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(X_\alpha)$.
- (5) $O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y) = O_2(X_\alpha) \cap O_2(Y_\alpha)$.
- (6) $T_\alpha = O_2(X_\alpha) O_2(Y_\alpha)$.
- (7) $X \leq_2 Y$ if and only if $T_\alpha \triangleleft Y$.

Proof. (1) Clearly $T_\alpha \triangleleft T$. Hence, $X_\alpha = T_\alpha O^2(X) \triangleleft T O^2(X) = X$.

(2) Statement 3.2.3 shows $T \cap O^2(X) = [O_2(X), O^2(X)]$. Hence, $T \cap X_\alpha = T \cap T_\alpha O^2(X) = T_\alpha (T \cap O^2(X)) = T_\alpha$ and so $T_\alpha \in \text{Syl}_2(X_\alpha)$ by (1).

(3) Part (1) shows $F^*(X_\alpha) \leq F^*(X) = O_2(X)$ and so $F^*(X_\alpha) = O_2(X_\alpha)$.

(4) As $X_\alpha \geq T_\alpha \geq [O_2(X), O^2(X)] \triangleleft X$, $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(X_\alpha)$.

(5) We have $O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y) = O_2(X) \cap O_2(Y) \cap X_\alpha \cap Y_\alpha = O_2(X_\alpha) \cap O_2(Y_\alpha)$ by (1).

(6) This follows from (2), (4), and (5).

(7) If $X \leq_2 Y$, then $T_\alpha \leq O_2(Y) \cap Y_\alpha$ and so $T_\alpha = O_2(Y_\alpha)$ by (2). Conversely, if $T_\alpha \triangleleft Y$, then $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq T_\alpha \leq O_2(Y)$.

DEFINITION. If two elements $\alpha = X_T Y$ and $\alpha' = X'_T Y'$ of Ω satisfy the conditions $T' = T_\alpha$, $X = \langle T, X' \rangle$, and $Y = \langle T, Y' \rangle$, then we shall say that α' is smaller than α and write $\alpha' < \alpha$ (primes do not indicate commutator subgroups).

4.5. If $\alpha = X_T Y \in \Omega$, then the following hold:

(1) There are T_α -irreducible subgroups X' and Y' of X_α and Y_α , respectively, such that $X = \langle T, X' \rangle$ and $Y = \langle T, Y' \rangle$.

(2) If X' and Y' are as in (1), then (X', T_α, Y') is an element of Ω smaller than α .

Proof. (1) As $X = T X_\alpha$ and $T_\alpha < X_\alpha$, X is generated by T and the T_α -irreducible subgroups of X_α . Hence there is a T_α -irreducible subgroup X' of X_α which is not contained in the unique maximal subgroup of X containing T and hence $X = \langle T, X' \rangle$. The same argument applies to Y .

(2) It is enough to observe that X' and Y' are contained in $\Gamma(T_\alpha)$ by 4.4.2 and 4.4.3.

4.6. Let $\alpha = X_T Y$ and $\alpha' = X'_T Y'$ be elements of Ω . If $\alpha' < \alpha$, then the following hold:

- (1) $\alpha' = \alpha$ if (and only if) $T' = T$.
- (2) $X' \leq X_\alpha$.
- (3) $[O_2(X'), O^2(X')] \leq [O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(X_\alpha) \leq O_2(X')$.
- (4) $T' = O_2(X') O_2(Y')$.
- (5) $\cap O_2(X')^T = O_2(X_\alpha)$.
- (6) If X is thin, then $X' = X_\alpha$ and $[O_2(X'), O^2(X')] = [O_2(X), O^2(X)]$.

Proof. (1) If $T' = T$, then $X = \langle T, X' \rangle = X'$ and similarly $Y = Y'$.

(2) As $T' = T_\alpha$ and $O^2(X') \leq O^2(X)$, $X' = T' O^2(X') \leq X_\alpha$.

(3) By 3.2.3, $[O_2(X'), O^2(X')] = T' \cap O^2(X') \leq T \cap O^2(X) = [O_2(X), O^2(X)]$. We have shown $[O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(X_\alpha)$ in Section 4.4. 4.4.2 shows $O_2(X_\alpha) \leq T_\alpha \leq X'$, so $O_2(X_\alpha) \leq O_2(X')$ by (2).

(4) This follows from (3) and 4.4.6, because $O_2(Y_\alpha) \leq O_2(Y')$ by the symmetry between X and Y .

(5) Set $M = \cap O_2(X')^T$. Then $[M, O^2(X')] \leq [O_2(X'), O^2(X')] \leq [O_2(X), O^2(X)] \leq O_2(X_\alpha) \leq M$ by (3) and 4.4.1. Hence $M \triangleleft \langle T, O^2(X') \rangle = X$, and therefore $M = O_2(X_\alpha)$.

(6) Assume that X is thin and let $P \in \text{Syl}_p(X)$, where $\pi(X) = \{2, p\}$. Then P is cyclic, and $X' = (P \cap X') T_\alpha$ by (2) and 4.4.2. If $X' \neq X_\alpha$, then $P \cap X' < P$ and so $X' \leq \Phi(P) T$. But then $\langle T, X' \rangle \neq X$ by 3.2.2, a contradiction. Therefore, $X' = X_\alpha$. Hence, $O^2(X') = O^2(X)$ and $[O_2(X'), O^2(X')] = T_\alpha \cap O^2(X') = T \cap X_\alpha \cap O^2(X') = T \cap O^2(X) = [O_2(X), O^2(X)]$ by 3.2.3.

4.7. Let α be an element of Ω such that $O_2(\alpha) = 1$. If $f(G) \leq 2$, then there is an element α' of Ω such that $\alpha' < \alpha$ and $O_2(\alpha') = 1$.

Proof. Let $\alpha = X_T Y$ and define Γ_X (resp. Γ_Y) to be the set of all T_α -irreducible subgroups Z of X_α (resp. Y_α) such that $X = \langle T, Z \rangle$ (resp. $Y = \langle T, Z \rangle$). Then Section 4.5 shows that $\Gamma_X \neq \emptyset \neq \Gamma_Y$ and that whenever $X' \in \Gamma_X$ and $Y' \in \Gamma_Y$, (X', T_α, Y') is an element of Ω smaller than α . Set $\Gamma = \Gamma_X \cup \Gamma_Y$ and suppose $O_2(X_1) \cap O_2(X_2) = O_{T_\alpha}(\langle X_1, X_2 \rangle)$ for each pair X_1, X_2 of elements of Γ . Then the intersection D of $O_2(Z)$, Z ranging over Γ , is normal in $\langle T, Z; Z \in \Gamma \rangle = \langle X, Y \rangle$. This is a contradiction because $1 \neq Z(T_\alpha) \leq D$ by 4.4.3 and 4.6.3. Hence, there are elements X', Y' of Γ with $O_2(X') \cap O_2(Y') \neq O_{T_\alpha}(\langle X', Y' \rangle)$. The X' and Y' must not be 2-embedded into one another, while 4.6.3 shows that two elements of Γ_X or of Γ_Y are 2-embedded into one another. Thus by the symmetry between X and Y , we may assume $X' \in \Gamma_X$, $Y' \in \Gamma_Y$, and that X' is not 2-embedded

into Y' . Set $\alpha' = (X', T_\alpha, Y')$. Then $\alpha' \in \Omega$, $\alpha' < \alpha$, and $T_\alpha = O_2(X') O_2(Y')$ by 4.6.4. If $O_2(\alpha') \neq 1$, then Section 4.3 gives $n_q(\langle X', Y' \rangle) \geq 3$, where $\pi(Y') = \{2, q\}$. However, this contradicts our assumption that $f(G) \leq 2$. Therefore, $O_2(\alpha') = 1$.

DEFINITION. An element $\alpha = X_T Y$ of Ω is said to be thin if both X and Y are thin.

4.8. Let α and α' be elements of Ω with $\alpha' < \alpha$. If α' is thin and $O_2(\alpha') = 1$, then $\alpha = \alpha'$.

Proof. Let $\alpha = X_T Y$ and $\alpha' = X_{T'} Y'$. The structure of α' is determined by Theorem D (the reader may consult [9, II] for details). Consequently neither X' nor Y' is 2-closed. Hence, neither X nor Y is 2-closed, and $O_2(\alpha) = 1$ by 4.1.3 and 4.4.7. Therefore it suffices to prove that α is thin, for if α is thin, then $T' = T_\alpha = T$ by a remark following Theorem E, whence $\alpha = \alpha'$ by 4.6.1.

Without loss we may assume that it is not $Y'_T X'$ but α' which is a $GL_3(2)$ -amalgam, an $Sp_4(2)$ -amalgam, ..., or a ${}^2F_4(2)$ -amalgam. First, consider the case that α' is a $GL_3(2)$ -amalgam or an $Sp_4(2)$ -amalgam. Then $O_2(X') \cong O_2(Y') \cong E_4$ or E_8 by definition and so both $[O_2(X), O^2(X)]$ and $[O_2(Y), O^2(Y)]$ have order at most 8 by 4.6.3. Therefore both X and Y are thin by Section 3.6.

Second, consider the case that α' is a ${}^2F_4(2)'$ -amalgam or a ${}^2F_4(2)$ -amalgam. Then $|[O_2(X'), O^2(X')]^2| = 2^8$ and $|O_2(X')| \leq 2^{11}$ by [9, II], so $|O_2(X_\alpha)/O_2(X_\alpha)^2| \leq 8$ by 4.6.3. Hence, $X_\alpha/O_2(X_\alpha)$ is embedded into $GL_3(2)$ by 4.4.3 and consequently X is thin. Similarly we have $|O_2(Y_\alpha)/O_2(Y_\alpha)^2| \leq 2^5$ and so $Y_\alpha/O_2(Y_\alpha)$ is isomorphic to a $\{2, 5\}$ -subgroup of $GL_5(2)$. Thus Y is thin also.

Therefore assume that α' is a $G_2(2)'$ -amalgam, a $G_2(2)$ -amalgam, an M_{12} -amalgam, or an $\text{Aut}(M_{12})$ -amalgam. Set $A = [O_2(X'), O^2(X')]$, $V = A^2$, and $B = [O_2(Y'), O^2(Y')]$. Then

$$A \cong Z_4 \times Z_4$$

by [9, II]. Consequently $[V, O^2(X')] \neq 1$, so $[O_2(X_\alpha)^2, O^2(X)] \neq 1$ by 4.6.3. Also $[O_2(X_\alpha)/O_2(X_\alpha)^2, O^2(X)] \neq 1$ by 4.4.3. Now since $|O_2(X')| \leq 2^6$ by [9, II], either $O_2(X_\alpha)^2$ or $O_2(X_\alpha)/O_2(X_\alpha)^2$ has order at most 8 by 4.6.3. Therefore X is a thin $\{2, 3\}$ -group by Section 3.6. Consequently

$$X' = X_\alpha \quad \text{and} \quad A = [O_2(X), O^2(X)]$$

by 4.6.6. Further $|T/O_2(X)| = 2$ by 3.2.1. Now since $B \not\leq O_2(X')$ [8, 3.4], we have $O_2(Y_\alpha) \not\leq O_2(X)$ by 4.6.3. Therefore,

$$T = O_2(X) O_2(Y_\alpha).$$

Because of 4.4.5, this gives

$$O_2(Y) = O_2(Y_\alpha)$$

and so by 4.6.3 we have the following sequence:

$$B \leq [O_2(Y), O^2(Y)] \leq O_2(Y) \leq O_2(Y').$$

From now on, we assume that Y is not thin and seek for a contradiction. From [9, II] we know that $|O_2(Y')| \leq 2^6$ and $|B^2| = 2$. Hence, $|O_2(Y)/O_2(Y)^2| \leq 2^5$ and, by Section 3.6, $O_2(Y)/O_2(Y)^2$ involves precisely one noncentral chief factor, say W , of Y , which necessarily satisfies $C_Y(W) = O_2(Y)$. Further $2^4 \leq |W| \leq 2^5$, but as $|GL_5(2):GL_4(2)|$ is not divisible by 3, $|W| = 2^4$ and $Y/O_2(Y)$ is embedded into $GL_4(2)$. Since Y is not thin, the 3-local structure of $GL_4(2)$ shows that $O^2(Y/O_2(Y)) \cong E_9$ and that $Y/O_2(Y)$ is embedded into a Sylow 3-normalizer of $GL_4(2)$, which is isomorphic to $S_3 \text{ wr } Z_2$. Consequently $T/O_2(Y)$ is embedded into D_8 , but since Y is not thin, $T/O_2(Y)$ is not elementary by Section 3.5. As $O_2(Y) \leq O_2(Y') < T' = T_x \triangleleft T$, we conclude that $T' \geq T^2 \not\leq O_2(Y)$. Set $K = O_2(X)^2$. Then

$$V \leq K \leq T' \cap O_2(X) = O_2(X_\alpha) = O_2(X'),$$

but since $T = O_2(X) O_2(Y)$, $K \not\leq O_2(Y)$. Now since $\alpha \neq \alpha'$, $T' < T$ by 4.6.1. Also $|T':O_2(Y')| = 2$. Thus $|O_2(Y'):O_2(Y)| \leq 2$. Hence, if $K \leq O_2(Y')$, then $O_2(Y) < KO_2(Y) = O_2(Y') \triangleleft T$, which contradicts 4.6.5. Therefore

$$K \not\leq O_2(Y').$$

Now X' acts irreducibly on A/V and $A = [O_2(X), O^2(X)] \not\leq K$ as $C_X(O_2(X)) \leq O_2(X)$. This forces $A \cap K = V$ and so if we set $L/V = C_{O_2(X')/V}(O^2(X'))$, then $K \leq L$. Thus $L \not\leq O_2(Y')$. From [9, II] we know that this occurs only when α' is an $\text{Aut}(M_{12})$ -amalgam. Consequently $|O_2(Y'):B| = 2$ and $|O_2(Y'):O_2(Y')^2| = 8$, while $|O_2(Y):O_2(Y)^2| \geq |W| = 16$. Therefore $O_2(Y) = B$ and hence $T/B \cong D_8$. Now $A = [O_2(X), O^2(X)] \triangleleft T$, and we know $|AB/B| = 2$ from [9, II]. Therefore $AB/B = Z(T/B)$. Also $L \triangleleft T$ as $X' = X_\alpha$, and we know $|LB/B| = 2$ from [9, II]. Therefore $LB/B = Z(T/B)$ also, and we conclude that $LB = AB$. However, we know from [9, II] that this is not the case. This contradiction completes the proof.

4.9. If $X \in \Gamma(T)$, T a 2-subgroup, $O_T(\langle X, N_G(T) \rangle) = 1$, and $|N_G(O_2(X)):X|$ is odd, then a Sylow 2-subgroup of G is dihedral or semidihedral or isomorphic to a Sylow 2-subgroup of $\text{Aut}(Sp_4(2))$.

Proof. Since $O_T(\langle X, N_G(T) \rangle) = 1$, no nonidentity characteristic subgroup of T is normal in X , so Theorem F shows that $X = TY$ where $Y = J(X)$ and Y is the direct product of n copies of S_4 , m copies of D_8 , and l copies of Z_2 , $n \geq 1$, $m \geq 0$, $l \geq 0$. Consequently, if we set $U = T \cap Y$, then U is the direct product of $n + m$ copies of D_8 and l copies of Z_2 . Hence, $J(T) = U$. Further, Y is generated by U -irreducible subgroups Y_i , $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, each of which is the direct product of one copy of S_4 , $(n - 1) + m$ copies of D_8 , and l copies of Z_2 , and satisfy the condition $\bigcap_i O_2(Y_i) = O_2(Y)$.

Suppose $O_U(\langle Y_i, Y_j^g \rangle) \neq 1$ for each i, j , and $g \in N_G(T)$. Then as $(Y_i, U, Y_j^g) \in \Omega$ and U has nilpotency class 2, Section 4.2 shows that Y_i and Y_j^g are 2-embedded into one another and so $O_2(Y_i) \cap O_2(Y_j^g) \triangleleft Y_i$. Hence, $O_2(Y) \cap O_2(Y_j^g) \triangleleft Y_i$ for each i, j , and $g \in N_G(T)$, because $O_2(Y) \triangleleft Y_i$. Since $\bigcap_j O_2(Y_j^g) = O_2(Y^g)$, it follows that $O_2(Y) \cap O_2(Y^g) \triangleleft Y_i$ for each i and $g \in N_G(T)$, and thus $O_2(Y) \cap O_2(Y^g) \triangleleft Y$ for each $g \in N_G(T)$. But this gives $\bigcap O_2(Y)^{N_G(T)} \triangleleft \langle Y, N_G(T) \rangle = \langle X, N_G(T) \rangle$, which is a contradiction because $1 \neq Z(U) \subseteq \bigcap O_2(Y)^{N_G(T)}$.

We have shown that $O_U(\langle Y_i, Y_j^g \rangle) = 1$ for some i, j , and $g \in N_G(T)$. We conclude by Theorem D that (Y_i, U, Y_j^g) is a $GL_3(2)$ -amalgam or an $Sp_4(2)$ -amalgam, and hence $Y_i \cong Y_j^g \cong S_4$ or $S_4 \times Z_2$ (see [9, II]). This shows $n = 1$, $m = 0$, and $l \leq 1$. Thus $Y \cong S_4$ or $S_4 \times Z_2$ and $O_U(\langle Y, Y^g \rangle) = 1$. Set $V = O_T(\langle X, X^g \rangle)$ and assume $V \neq 1$. Then $1 \neq V \cap \Omega_1(Z(T)) \leq V \cap U$ and, as $V \cap U = V \cap Y = V \cap Y^g$, $V \cap U \triangleleft \langle Y, Y^g \rangle$. This contradiction shows that $O_T(\langle X, X^g \rangle) = 1$. We conclude again by Theorem D that $X \cong S_4$ or $S_4 \times Z_2$ and accordingly $T \cong D_8$ or $D_8 \times Z_2$. Hence, $\{O_2(X), O_2(X^g)\}$ is the set of the elementary abelian maximal subgroups of T , and if $X \cong S_4 \times Z_2$, then $\{Z(X), Z(X^g)\}$ is the set of the maximal subgroups of $Z(T)$ distinct from $[T, T]$. This gives $O_2(X)^{g^2} = O_2(X)$ and $Z(X)^{g^2} = Z(X)$, so there is a 2-element $t \in N_G(T)$ satisfying $O_2(X)^t = O_2(X)^g$ and $Z(X)^t = Z(X)^g$.

Let $\langle t, T \rangle \leq S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$. Then as $|N_G(O_2(X)) : X|$ is odd, $N_S(O_2(X)) = T$ and hence, $C_S(O_2(X)) = C_T(O_2(X)) = O_2(X)$. If $X \cong S_4$, then $O_2(X) \cong E_4$ and Suzuki's lemma shows that S is either dihedral or semidihedral. Therefore assume $X \cong S_4 \times Z_2$ and set $R = N_S(T)$. Then R acts by conjugation on the set $\{O_2(X), O_2(X)^t\}$ of the elementary abelian maximal subgroups of T and the stabilizer of $O_2(X)$ is T . Hence, $|R : T| = 2$ and $R = \langle t, T \rangle$. As t moves $O_2(X)$, $R/Z(T) \cong D_8$ and we may assume $t^2 \in Z(T)$. Then as t moves $Z(X)$, $\langle t, Z(T) \rangle \cong D_8$ and we may assume $t^2 = 1$. Thus $C_T(t) \cong Z_4$ and involutions in $R - T$ are all conjugate to t in R . This yields that elementary abelian subgroups of R outside T are of order at most 4. Hence, $J(R) = T$ and so $N_S(R) \leq N_S(T) = R$. We conclude that $S = R = \langle t, T \rangle$. Let $1 \neq a \in Z(X)$ and $b \in O_2(X) - Z(T)$. Then $T = \langle a, a', b, b' \rangle$ and as $1 \neq [b, b'] \in [T, T]$, we have $[b, b'] = aa'$. Thus $|S| = 2^5$ and S is a

homomorphic image of a group Σ presented on generators α, β, τ with defining relations $\alpha^2 = \beta^2 = \tau^2 = 1$, $\alpha\beta = \beta\alpha$, $\alpha\beta^\tau = \beta^\tau\alpha$, $\alpha\alpha^\tau = \alpha^\tau\alpha$, $[\beta, \beta^\tau] = \alpha\alpha^\tau$. To complete the proof it is enough to observe that these relations imply $|\Sigma| \leq 2^5$ and that a Sylow 2-subgroup of $\text{Aut}(Sp_4(2))$ has order 2^5 and has three generators satisfying the above relations.

5. PROOFS OF THEOREMS B AND C

Let G be a group satisfying the hypothesis of Section 4. In order to prove Theorem B, let $\alpha = (X, S, Y)$ be an extremal S_2 -amalgam in G with $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$. Then since G is of characteristic 2 type and $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$, we have $C_X(O_2(X)) \leq O_2(X)$ and $C_Y(O_2(Y)) \leq O_2(Y)$. Thus $\alpha \in \Omega$ and $O_2(\alpha) = 1$. As we are assuming $f(G) \leq 2$, Section 4.7 shows that there is a sequence $\alpha_0 = \alpha, \alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_n, \dots$ of elements of Ω such that $\alpha_{n+1} < \alpha_n$ and $O_2(\alpha_n) = 1$ for each $n \geq 0$. Let $\alpha_n = (X_n, T_n, Y_n)$, $n \geq 0$. Then as $T_{n+1} \leq T_n$ for each n , there is a nonnegative integer m such that $T_{m+1} = T_m$. Theorem E now shows that α_m is thin, so by Section 4.8, $\alpha = \alpha_m$ and α is thin.

In order to prove Theorem C, let $S \in \text{Syl}_2(G)$ and assume that S is contained in a unique maximal 2-local subgroup, say M , of G . Assume that M is not strongly embedded in G and pick a 2-subgroup T of M so that $|N_M(T)|_2$ is maximal subject to the conditions $T \neq 1$ and $N_G(T) \not\leq M$. Let $R \in \text{Syl}_2(N_M(T))$. Then as $R \notin \text{Syl}_2(M)$, $|R| < |N_M(R)|_2$ and so $N_G(T) \cap N_G(R) \leq N_M(T)$. Thus $R \in \text{Syl}_2(N_G(T))$. As $N_G(T) \not\leq M$, there is an R -irreducible subgroup X of $N_G(T)$ such that $X \not\leq M$. The X is contained in $\Gamma(R)$ because $R \in \text{Syl}_2(N_G(T))$. Set $V = O_R(\langle X, N_G(R) \rangle)$. Then $|R| < |N_M(R)|_2 \leq |N_M(V)|_2$ and $N_G(V) \not\leq M$, so $V = 1$. Further $N_G(O_2(X)) \not\leq M$ and $R \leq N_M(O_2(X))$, so $R \in \text{Syl}_2(N_G(O_2(X)))$. We can now apply Section 4.9 to conclude that (C.2) is satisfied.

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